

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 050910Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8265
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 08293

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR GW US
SUBJECT: EHMKE VISIT; SPD CONTACTS WITH THE US

REFS: (A) STATE 105859; (B) BONN 5190; (C) BONN 7712
ALL NOTAL

1. FOLLOWING IS FURTHER INFORMATION ON EHMKE'S VISIT TO
WASHINGTON APRIL 16-19.

2. EHMKE, AS WELL AS LEBER, STOBBE AND WISCHNEWSKI,
SPOKE ON THE SUBJECT OF US-FRG RELATIONS BEFORE A MEETING
OF THE SPD BUNDESTAG DIRECTORATE (VORSTAND) APRIL 24.
ACCORDING TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTS, EHMKE'S MAIN POINT WAS THAT
NEITHER THE SPD NOR THE GERMAN PUBLIC SHOULD UNDERRATE
OR UNDERESTIMATE PRESIDENT CARTER AND HIS ADMINISTRATION.
ACCORDING TO PRIVATE ACCOUNTS WE HAVE HEARD OF THAT
MEETING FROM SPD CIRCLES, THIS WAS INDEED EHMKE'S THEME.
EHMKE NOTED THAT THERE WERE REAL PROBLEMS IN THE US-FRG
RELATIONSHIP, PARTICULARLY CITING FLUCTUATION OF THE
DOLLAR AND RECENT US NON-PROLIFERATION
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LEGISLATION. AT THE SAME TIME HE PUT THESE IN A CONTEXT
OF DISAGREEMENTS AMONG FRIENDS AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF
A LONGER STANDING RELATIONSHIP, AND INDEED WAS QUOTED
IN THE PRESS AS MAKING THE ANALOGY OF IRRITATIONS DURING
THE COURSE OF A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE OF 30 YEARS AND
LONGER. EHMKE SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE
SIGNS OF STRENGTH EVIDENT IN THE ADMINISTRATION'S RECENT

ACTIVITIES. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, HE SAID THAT NO OTHER PRESIDENT HAD ATTEMPTED SUCH IMPORTANT AND CONTROVERSIAL LEGISLATION AS THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY AND ENERGY LEGISLATION. THESE EFFORTS ARE IN FACT PART OF A PATTERN OF VIGOR AND DETERMINATION BY THE ADMINISTRATION WHICH SHOULD BY NO MEANS BE UNDERRATED OR SEEN AS WEAK. THESE GENERAL THEMES WERE SECONDED BY LEBER, STOBBE AND WISCHNEWSKI.

3. EHMKE, PLUS LEBER (WHO ALONG WITH STOBBE HAD ALSO RECENTLY BEEN TO THE US IN CONNECTION WITH GENERAL CLAY'S FUNERAL) THEN GAVE THEIR THOUGHTS TO THE SPD GROUP ON THE US TELEVISION SHOW "HOLOCAUST." THE THRUST OF THEIR REMARKS WAS (A) THAT INITIAL GERMAN PRESS REPORTING ON "HOLOCAUST" HAD BEEN SENSATIONALIST AND

UNFAIR; (B) THAT THE SHOW (EHMKE SAID HE HAD SEEN PORTIONS OF IT) WAS AN ACCURATE RENDITION OF EVENTS; AND (C) THAT IT WOULD BE WORTH SHOWING THE SERIES IN THE FRG. AT THE SAME TIME, EHMKE NOTED HIS CONCERN THAT, THE ABOVE NOTWITHSTANDING, SUCH A SERIES COMING AT THIS TIME DOES NOT ADD TO THE QUALITY OF US-GERMAN RELATIONS OR US OPINIONS OF GERMANY. (COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND THAT GERMAN TV HAS IN FACT SECURED SHOWING RIGHTS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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"HOLOCAUST" AND THAT THE SERIES WILL PROBABLY BE SHOWN ON GERMAN TELEVISION.)

4. ALSO ON APRIL 24, EHMKE DISCUSSED HIS US TRIP WITH THE AMBASSADOR. HE SAID HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE TRIP AND HIS CONTACTS, AND WILL BE TRAVELLING AGAIN TO THE US IN MAY AS WELL AS IN JUNE (REF B). HE STRESSED THAT THIS AND OTHER VISITS BY MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY TO AMERICA IN THE NEAR FUTURE ARE MEANT TO UNDERSCORE SPD SUPPORT OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US (ADDING THAT THIS WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WISHES OF CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT).

5. EHMKE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD USED HIS WASHINGTON TRIP TO DISCUSS THE MATTER OF ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL AND SPAIN, AS WELL AS GREECE AND TURKEY, PHRASING HIS DISCUSSION OF THESE AREAS IN THE CONTEXT OF A SORT OF "EUROPEAN NORTH-SOUTH PROGRAM." HE OPINED THAT THIS SUBJECT MATTER WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE ONE TO DISCUSS AT THE FORTHCOMING ECONOMIC SUMMIT IN BONN. HK ALSO SAID THAT MORE ASSISTANCE TO THESE COUNTRIES COULD HELP STIMULATE EXPORT TRADE AS

WELL AS THE OVER-ALL ECONOMIES OF INDUSTRIALIZED
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, A MATTER HE ASSUMED WAS DESIRED BY
THE US. IN THIS CONTEXT, EHMKE DIGRESSED TO GIVE THE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 08293

AMBASSADOR SOME VIEWS ON OTHER ECONOMIC ISSUES. IT
WAS HIS VIEW THAT OTHER PROPOSALS FOR ECONOMIC
STIMULATION, SUCH AS A TAX CUT OR MORE DEFICIT SPENDING
BY THE FRG, WOULD NOT WORK AND WERE NOT PRACTICAL. IN
THIS CONNECTION, HE SAID THAT THE SPD WOULD "NEVER"
ACCEPT AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD TAX CUT, ADDING THAT THE
CHANCELLOR KNEW THIS.

6. EHMKE ALSO COMMENTED TO THE AMBASSADOR ON ITALY.
HE FELT THAT THE US WAS OVERDOING ITS OPPOSITION TO
HAVING THE PCI IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, SAYING THAT
NOTHING IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE PCI, ESPECIALLY IN THE
LABOR FIELD, AND GIVING HIS VIEW THAT THE TREND OF
THE FUTURE IS CLEARLY IN THE DIRECTION OF MORE PCI
INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT.

7. COMMENT. EHMKE HAS A TENDENCY TO BE A GADFLY, AND
HIS COMMENTS DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT MAINSTREAM
VIEWS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY, NOT TO SPEAK OF THE

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GOVERNMENT. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE UNDERSTAND FROM A RELIABLE CHANCELLERY SOURCE THAT EHMKE'S VISIT WAS INITIATED BY THE SPD (AND, WE SUSPECT, LARGELY SELF-GENERATED), RATHER THAN THE CHANCELLOR, AND THAT EHMKE'S COMMENTS TO THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE THAT HE WAS ON A "FIREMAN'S MISSION" FOR THE CHANCELLOR SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH A SUITABLE DOSE OF SALT.

8. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THIS TRIP, AND OTHERS THAT WILL FOLLOW, ARE UNIMPORTANT. IN ADDITION TO FAVORABLE PUBLIC RESONANCE, THEY SERVE AN IMPORTANT PURPOSE FOR THE NEAR TERM IN BRINGING VOCAL SPD SPOKESMEN IN PERSONAL CONTACT WITH US-FRG ISSUES, A PROCESS THAT USUALLY PRODUCES POSITIVE RESULTS AND THAT CAN BROADEN THE CHANCELLOR'S MARGINS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY FOR OBJECTIVE POLICY MAKING. (A CASE IN POINT IS EHMKE'S VIEW ON THE DESIRABILITY OF "RESTRAINT" BY THE SOVIETS IN RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL 7 ERW DECISION -- REF A -- A VIEW HE HAS ALSO ECHOED HERE AND WHICH PLACES HIM ON A DIFFERENT SIDE OF THIS ISSUE FROM HIS FELLOW MEMBER OF THE SPD LEFT, EGON BAHR, WHO HAS RIDICULED THE CONCEPT OF SOVIET "RESTRAINT" BEFORE FRG JOURNALISTS.) LOOKING AHEAD, WE BELIEVE THE EFFORTS THE SPD IS MAKING TO INCREASE CONTACTS WITH THE US CONGRESS AND OFFICIALDOM CAN BEAR IMPORTANT FRUIT OVER THE LONGER TERM, AS CAN PARALLEL EFFORTS THAT ARE GROWING WITHIN THE OPPOSITION CDU AND CSU PARTIES, AND WE WELCOME WASHINGTON'S CONTINUING EFFORTS TO MAKE THE DIALOGUE A SUCCESSFUL ONE.
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